

Summer Pet Care Tips

With the sun shining bright on the longer days, summer is the time when many people are able to indulge in their favorite outdoor activities. We often want to include our dogs in our summertime jaunts, but certain precautions should be taken to ensure your pet stays safe and enjoys the fun in the sun.

The Heat is On

Instead of sweating, dogs cool themselves by panting. This is an exchange of warm air for cool air when the temperature outside is cooler than their body temperature, so your dog needs escape from the heat and sun just like you do on hot summer days. If your dog stays outside during the day, provide him with plenty of clean, cool water and shelter to escape the midday sun. You may even keep a water filled kiddie pool in the yard for him to take dips in throughout the day to cool off. If you have a backyard pool, limit your dog's access to prevent him from taking unsupervised swims and drowning. Also consider crating your dog inside your home during the day when the temperatures rise too high. Crate training is a great way to enable your dog to remain in the comfort of your home without your direct supervision. Crate training tips can be found in the Training Tips section of www.dogtrainingandboardingaustin.com.

As summer is often a time to venture out with your dog, care should be taken in getting him safely to your destination. While many dogs enjoy riding in the car, your dog should never be left in a parked car. The temperature inside a car can quickly climb to over 120 degrees (even with windows partially open), causing heat stroke and even death in as little as ten minutes. Don't risk your dog's well being for a quick run into the store- he will be better off left in the cool comfort of home. If your dog rides in the bed of your pick-up, secure him with a harness and leash or in a tied-down crate to prevent him from spilling out the back from sharp turns or sudden braking. Keep in mind that if the floor of your pick-up bed is metal, it will heat up with the climbing temperatures, so cover the floor with matting to protect his paws and skin from burning.

Summer Skin Care

As the outside temperatures rise, make sure your dog stays comfortable in his skin. Pavement can heat to scalding degrees on warm days, making it uncomfortable and even dangerous for your dog to walk on it. Inspect paws closely after walks to check for burns or blisters on his sensitive foot pads. Thin coated or light skinned dogs can also suffer sunburns on sunny days. If you plan to have your dog out in the sun, slather on pet-sunscreen to protect his skin. Contact your vet for advice on pet-safe burn ointments should your dog suffer burns to his skin or feet.

Hot spots and other skin problems can crop up over night during warm months, causing discomfort to your dog. Check your dog's skin regularly for irritation or redness to treat and prevent it from worsening. Also check in his ears for irritation and dirt (especially if you take your dog swimming) that may signal the beginning of an ear infection. Consult with your veterinarian if your dog has skin or ear problems for the best way to treat and prevent them.

How can my dog possibly stay cool wearing that fur coat? Many people are in the habit of clipping their long-coated dog's hair short or shaving it entirely during hot summer months. While this can make many dogs more comfortable, some dog's coats (like that of Nordic breeds) serve as an insulator in cold and heat extremes. Clipping an insulating coat can sometimes make it harder for your dog to cool himself. Consult with your veterinarian or a trained groomer for advice on your dog's best summer 'do.

Pests and Other Pet Peeves

Summer is a time when many plants are in bloom, and when gardens are at their best. When out walking with your dog, make sure the area is clear of plants that can be dangerous to your dog. Burs and thorny vines can get caught in your dog's coat and pads, and scrape his feet. Weeds like foxtails can even become lodged in your dog's nose from a casual sniff. Dogs can also be affected by poison ivy, causing skin irritation and discomfort. If you have a green thumb, make sure that the plants in your garden are safe for animals, as some are poisonous and even fatal, to your dog. If you use fertilizer, use it only in areas that your dog will not have access to, or find one that is pet friendly. If

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you suspect that your pet has ingested a dangerous plant or fertilizer, take him to your vet immediately to begin treatment.

Along with plants, insects are also in abundance. Keep your dog safe from parasites by using preventatives. Fleas can cause much discomfort and skin irritation in your pet, and they can transmit tapeworms. Tick bites also cause skin irritation, and even infection if gone unnoticed for too long. Ticks carry diseases that can be transmitted to your dog from a bite. Thoroughly check over your dog on a regular basis for these tiny terrors, especially after walks in wilderness areas. Mosquitoes also tend to be out in numbers during warm months, so keep your dog current on heartworm prevention.

Being cold-blooded, snakes tend to be most active during the warm months. Many are camouflaged to blend with their surroundings, so extra attention should be paid to the areas you take your dog. While not all are poisonous, it is better to be safe than sorry when walking your dog. Bites can happen extremely fast, and are not always accompanied by a noticeable warning. A bite from a poisonous snake can make your dog severely ill, and even be deadly. Talk to your veterinarian about what to do if your dog is bitten, and always seek immediate veterinary attention in case of a bite.

The ASPCA hosts the Animal Poison Control Center (888-426-4435), a service that is manned by veterinarians 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. This service can help you provide help to your dog in the event that he ingests something poisonous, or is stung or bitten. Information needed when you call includes name, address, phone number, breed and weight of your dog, what was ingested and how much, and what symptoms are showing. Keeping a well stocked poison kit in your home can help in administering initial help to your dog with the aid of a poison control technician. The should contain a fresh bottle of 3% hydrogen peroxide (USP), soft dog food, turkey baster, bulb syringe or large medical syringe, saline eye solution, artificial tear gel, mild grease-cutting dishwashing liquid in case of skin contamination, rubber gloves, forceps, muzzle, pet carrier.

Summer Fun

A lot of festivals and other events take place in the summer and many people want their dogs to join in on the fun. While you may think your party animal will have as good a

time as you, the crowds and loud noises can sometimes be stressful for your dog.

Combined with the heat, it can also be dangerous. Consider the event you are going to and whether it will be safe for your dog before bringing him along. If you do bring your dog, be sure to use pet-sunscreen to prevent him from burning. Also allow for plenty of stops to rest in the shade and to drink some water.

When outside playing with your dog, be sure to keep a close watch on him to know when it is time to stop and rest. Not all dogs will stop playing on their own when they get too hot or tired. Some dogs are so intent on chasing the toy or whatever they are doing that they will keep playing until they are in serious trouble. You must be attentive and set a limit on your playtimes for your dog's safety. Schedule your playtimes in the morning or early evening when the temperatures have cooled and the sun isn't directly overhead.

Don't feed your dog immediately before or right after your playtimes to avoid stomach upset. Wait at least thirty minutes after you have fed your dog to begin playing, and at least that long to allow your dog to cool down and rest before feeding him. Also, don't allow your dog to drink too much too fast after playing to avoid an upset stomach.

Heat stroke

Heat stroke is a true emergency that warrants immediate attention. Heat stroke takes place when the body's temperature becomes higher than it is capable of cooling itself. Symptoms include the presence of any combination of: heavy panting, excessive drooling, rapid pulse, unsteadiness, glazed eyes, staggering, deep red or purple tongue, and vomiting. If these signs are noted, a rectal temperature reading should be taken. If the body temperature is over 103°F, stop all activity and move your dog inside. If temperature readings are higher than this, attempts to lower the body temperature should begin immediately. Bathe your dog in cool, but not cold, water immediately and for the first few minutes to try and lower his body temperature. Your dog should then be immediately taken to a veterinarian for treatment. If you can, call your veterinarian when you are on your way so they can be better prepared for your arrival and administer treatment more quickly. Remember that heat stroke is extremely serious and delays in the receipt of medical treatment could potentially fatal for your dog.

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Pet Tips for Summertime or Any Time

Below are general tips that are helpful in keeping your dog safe no matter what time of year it is.

- Keep your dog current on all vaccinations to prevent the transmission of disease. This is especially important if he will be in the company of other animals, as well as other pet owners.
- Keep current identification on your dog at all times. A tag with your name and phone number, and address if you want, should be worn. Many states require dogs to wear a rabies tag, which can sometimes be traced by the administering clinic name or rabies number. Microchipping or tattooing is also a helpful means of identification.
- Have up to date photos and descriptions of your dog in case he becomes lost. Descriptions should include microchip or tattoo numbers, and any pertinent information that would help someone identify your dog (ie: markings, scars, etc.).
- Keep your dog on leash anytime you are outside your home or in an area that is not secured by a fence. Most areas require that dogs be kept on leash when off the owner's property. A leash can save your dog's life should he try to run into the street.

Sunny Dispositions

Summer is a wonderful time for all the outdoor activities you and your best friend want to do. At Starmark Animal Behavior Center we believe that a well-behaved and well-trained dog is a happy dog and a better companion. Each dog is unique, and so is each owner. That's why we use a variety of techniques, customizing your dog's training experience to suit his personality and your individual needs. Using our training techniques and tips, which emphasize consistency and patience, you and your dog can enjoy all that summer has in store.

Trainer Developed: Academy Tested

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The certified training and behavior specialists at Starmark Academy created this behavior solutions guide with you and your dog's needs in mind. Products mentioned in this guide are available at PETsMART and other pet supply retailers, as well as online at our web site: www.dogtrainingandboardingaustin.com. All products, guides and videos are tested and approved by the training directors of Starmark Academy, our accredited school for professional dog trainers. It is the hands-on experience of our training division, combined with the vast technical knowledge and experience of the Starmark Academy staff that allows us to bring you useful and unique dog training and behavior solutions. We train dogs just like yours every day; we work with pet enthusiasts just like you every day. Thank you for choosing Starmark, the world leader in pet education.

For additional pet solutions and information about our products, please visit Starmark online at our Web sites: www.dogtrainingandboardingaustin.com; www.schoolfordogtrainers.com; and www.aboutdogtraining.com.

Starmark Trainer Recommended Equipment

Pro-Training Clicker™—A fun and easy way to teach your dog obedience commands. It's like saying "Well done," on time, every time your dog does something you like.

Starmark Everlasting Treat Ball™—An interactive toy that will keep your dog so busy, he won't even miss you while you're gone! The unique shape of the ball allows it to wobble and roll on its own. It is hollow, so you can also hide treats or a meal in it.

Starmark Everlasting Treats™— All-natural chew treats designed to fit on the ends of the Everlasting Treat Ball™. They also are great by themselves as tasty snacks.

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Pro-Training Treats™—Bite-size treats to fit inside the Everlasting Treat Ball™. Used alone, these treats are perfect as tasty food rewards during training.

Starmark Durafoam Disc™— New, easy-flying disc made of soft, puncture-resistant material that won't hurt your dog's mouth. It's the perfect toy for burning off energy during afternoon frolics.

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